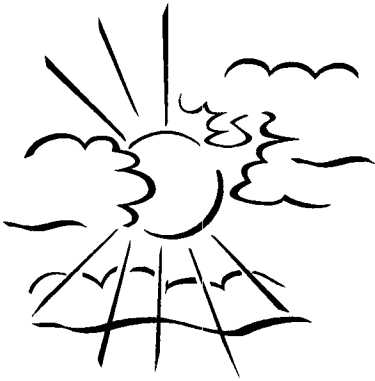


***Department  
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# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Tuesday, April 18, 2006**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
Child Abuse/ Neglect/Protection	2-9
Health Care	10-11
Domestic Violence	12
Juvenile Justice	13-14
Long-Term Care	15-17
Homelessness	18
Charities	19
EITC	20-21
Block Grants	22-23

\*Important story at this spot

# Woman Delivers Baby In Home, Leaves Alone

## *Police Are Investigating*

POSTED: 11:13 am EDT April 18, 2006

Police are searching for a woman who they say went into a basement of a Detroit home, delivered a baby and then left her there.

A 23-year-old Detroit woman who was pregnant visited her aunt's home in Detroit on Monday night. According to the family, the woman left the home and then they heard sounds of a crying baby.

The family immediately phoned 911. Paramedics arrived and found the newborn girl with the umbilical still attached. Crews cut the baby's umbilical cord and rushed her by ambulance to Sinai Grace Hospital, where she is being closely watched, according to police.

The baby is listed in critical condition, and police continue to search for the mother.

*Copyright 2006 by [ClickOnDetroit.com](http://ClickOnDetroit.com).*

# Mom fighting for kids challenges police report

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

By Theresa D. McClellan  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The case awaits a judge's decision, but on Monday, Marina Ivanova came ready for a fight. Against her lawyer's advice, she took the stand and faced cross-examination from three lawyers in the second day of a hearing to decide custody of her two children.

The children of Ivanova, who is from Ukraine, were removed from her home by police in 2004. Authorities said they found overwhelming filth in her apartment in Southeast Grand Rapids. At the time, the children were 3 years and 23 months old.

In Grand Rapids Family Court on Monday, Ivanova challenged Assistant Kent County Prosecutor Laura Clifton about the photos of her apartment submitted as evidence. She has denied authorities' claims that there was feces spread around her home.

"You show me, if there was feces, you show me why it is not in the picture," said Ivanova, who testified the rooms were in poor condition because she was in the process of moving.

She testified she left the children with a friend, and had left him a key that he lost.

When police arrived, responding to a report of crying children, they found the toddlers alone in urine-soaked beds. Last year, Ivanova, 32, pleaded guilty to two charges of child abuse stemming from that case and was sentenced to probation.

Ivanova and her ex-husband, James Warner, are fighting for custody of the children, who remain in foster care.

Judge G. Patrick Hillary said he will make a decision next month.

# No jail time for mother whose baby died in hot car

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

By Heather L. VanDyke  
MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

HART -- Sabrina McClure won't be serving time behind bars for the death of her infant son, but she's forever "marked" as a negligent mother, an Oceana County judge told her Monday. The 19-year-old stood quietly before Circuit Court Judge Terry Thomas, holding her hands behind her back, as the judge scolded her for leaving her son, Michael Anthony McClure, inside a hot car for more than seven hours June 20.

The 3-month-old baby died of hyperthermia while left in a Pontiac Grand Prix that day, as temperatures climbed from a low of 48 degrees to highs in the sunny mid-70s. McClure pleaded no contest in March to the charge of second-degree child abuse.

"I don't know that there's any mother in this country that would excuse that type of negligence," Thomas told McClure. "You are essentially marked for the rest of your life."

McClure was sentenced to two years probation, with credit for one day already served in jail, and ordered to pay \$120 in fines and costs and a \$10-a-day supervision fee for every day she is on probation.

Circuit court guidelines recommend zero to 17 months of jail time for the child abuse charge, a felony. Thomas added one condition to McClure's sentence: Mandatory parenting classes so she can "learn how to be a mother."

"You apparently don't know how to do that now," Thomas told McClure, who chose to say nothing prior to her sentencing. McClure left the courtroom crying.

According to court documents, McClure checked her son, Michael, twice from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m., while she helped family members bale hay at a family farm in Weare Township.

The documents indicate she checked the baby at 9 a.m. and again about 11 a.m., about two hours before a friend found the baby dead about 1 p.m.

Those two hours of neglect and negligence, you'll have to live with for the rest of your life," Thomas told her.

According to Oceana County Prosecutor Terry L. Shaw, second-degree child abuse is "a reckless act causing serious injury." She initially had been charged with involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse.

Shaw said Monday after the sentencing that he would have "preferred" that McClure receive some jail time.

"I did advocate some jail time, for Michael and all the potential Michaels," Shaw said. "It wasn't the kind of thing that happened when she turned her back for a second."

Family members and police had testified that McClure tucked her napping infant under a blanket inside the car to protect him from the cold as she and friends camped in a tent on the Weare Township property. The group was baling hay and went to bed around 5:30 a.m. after sitting around a campfire along North 88th Avenue.

McClure's mother, Debora Giraitis, 5390 N. 88th, said Monday that the whole ordeal is a "tragedy." Giraitis said McClure, who had been living in California with her husband and son prior to the incident, had just been to her hometown in June to help the family. Michael was McClure's only child. Her husband remained in California at the time of the incident.

"It's not anything easy," Giraitis told a Chronicle reporter outside the courtroom Monday.

"Basically, it's a tragedy. We had been doing hay all day long. (McClure) fell asleep and she was exhausted and didn't wake up again" to check on the baby.

According to court testimony, the baby's diaper was drenched when a friend of McClure's found his lifeless body in the car. An autopsy showed the infant died of hyperthermia, abnormally high body temperature. His body temperature was more than 107 degrees nearly an hour after he was removed, lifeless, from the hot car, according to court testimony.

McClure later told a police investigator the car window nearest the infant was cracked open about 2 inches.

# 2 men in separate cases accused of sexually abusing children

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

By Kim Crawford

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The charging of two area men in child sexual abuse cases this week should remind parents to know where their children are - and even to know the background of their friends' parents and caretakers, Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell said Monday.

"This is a warning to parents and guardians of young children," he said. "Typically, law enforcement tries to keep sex crimes low key for the sake of the victims, but we're ignoring the bigger problem that people need to know that these offenders are out there."

Pickell referred to the child sexual abuse cases against Jonathon David Torrey, 34, who was arrested in Flint Township over the weekend, and Dale A. Drinkwine, 36, of Fenton Township. Torrey, whose case involved two boys, was arraigned by Flint District Judge William H. Crawford II on a charge of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. His bond was set at \$35,000 cash.

Drinkwine was charged on two counts each of first-degree and second-degree criminal sexual conduct. Charged with molesting two girls from his neighborhood, he was arraigned before Grand Blanc District Judge Christopher R. Odette. His bond was set at \$400,000 cash.

Both men remain in the Genesee County Jail.

According to Sgt. David Dwyre of the Genesee County Sheriff's Department, swearing out the warrant against Drinkwine before Odette, the suspect invited the girls into his mobile home when they came over to play with his stepdaughter.

Though she wasn't home, he told the visiting friends they could come in to use his phone to call her. He allegedly molested the girls while they sat on his lap playing with a Ouija board, Dwyre testified.

"This case has rocked their community," Dwyre said in court.

Drinkwine told Odette at his arraignment that he has been working as a maintenance man for a relative's apartments.

He is on parole for a 1992 case in which he was sentenced in 1994 to 3-10 years in prison for assault with intent to commit great bodily harm less than murder.

In Torrey's case, the sheriff said the mother of two young sons found they were performing sex acts on each other. When she demanded to know who had shown them this behavior, they allegedly told her that Torrey had. This was said to have taken place in Flint as far back as three years ago, Pickell said. Torrey was living with a relative in Flint Township when he was arrested.

Both Torrey and Drinkwine will face preliminary examinations later this month.

Pickell credited Dwyre with his work in both cases.

"He's put long hours in on these investigations," the sheriff said.

Macomb County

## **Warren students sue former teacher**

### **They say that he molested them and officials did nothing**

Detroit Free Press

April 18, 2006

BY DAN CORTEZ  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Ten schoolgirls have filed a lawsuit alleging their fifth-grade teacher sexually molested them at Warren Consolidated Schools facilities during the 2003-04 school year.

The suit, filed last month in U.S. District Court, lists the school district, former teacher Roderick Reese and four school employees as defendants.

The defendants have until Monday to respond.

The students each seek \$10 million in damages, according to the suit.

"Warren Consolidated Schools did nothing, or far too little, to address the problem," William R. Seikaly, the girls' attorney, wrote in the suit.

Seikaly, based in Bloomfield Hills, did not return a message Monday seeking comment.

A spokesman for the school district could not be reached for comment. The district offices were closed Monday for spring break.

The suit alleges that Reese, now 54, molested the girls, who were ages 9 to 11, while he taught at Wilde Elementary.

Reese pleaded no contest in March 2005 to one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

A no-contest plea is not an admission of guilt, but is treated as one for sentencing purposes.

Reese was sentenced in May to 5 years of probation, with the first year served in the Macomb County Jail, records show. He was released March 4.

Kenneth Karam, his lawyer in the criminal case, did not return a message Monday seeking comment.

Contact **DAN CORTEZ** at 586-469-1827 or [cortez@freepress.com](mailto:cortez@freepress.com).

# **Molester assaults girl while serving probation Shores man gets maximum sentence**

PUBLISHED: April 18, 2006

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A visibly upset judge sentenced a St. Clair Shores man to more than six years in prison, the toughest sentence possible, for sexually assaulting a little girl while on probation for sexually assaulting another child.

Ronald Elliott Walleman, 53, was sentenced Monday by Macomb Circuit Judge Mary Chrzanowski, who scolded Walleman for assaulting a 10-year-old girl after the judge had already sentenced him to one year in jail and five years probation for assaulting a 5-year-old in 2001.

"You slapped the court in the face when you went out and committed this new crime," Chrzanowski told Walleman moments before ordering him to spend 78 months in prison, less one year of time-served.

Walleman was convicted of attempted first-degree criminal sexual conduct and sentenced by Chrzanowski in 2003 for assaulting a St. Clair Shores girl. Originally charged with first-degree criminal sexual conduct, he reached a plea bargain after two additional victims came forward and agreed to testify about his alleged assaults against them. He then pleaded guilty to the attempted charge.

After being released from the Macomb County Jail nearly two years ago and still on probation, he sexually assaulted a 10-year-old girl in a public place in Monroe County and pleaded guilty last year to second-degree criminal sexual conduct. He was sentenced to at least 38 months in prison.

Because of the probation violation, Chrzanowski could sentence him to two-thirds of 10 years, the maximum penalty of the offense, although sentencing guidelines indicated a minimum sentence ranging from only 5 months to 23 months.

Walleman's attorney, Dennis Johnston, argued for the judge staying within the guidelines because the offenses in recent years are the only two that have been substantiated in a court.

But Chrzanowski said Walleman's actions demanded the most severe penalty possible.

"I fear for the safety of society and the safety of the children of Macomb County and of the state of Michigan," Chrzanowski said.

The mothers of the victims in both cases attended Monday's sentencing and were pleased with the outcome.

The mother of the St. Clair Shores victim said despite Walleman's apology at the hearing, she is convinced he is not remorseful.

"If Ronald Walleman was truly remorseful for his actions, for using my 5-year-old daughter to sexually gratify himself, then he would not have molested again," said the woman who is not being identified by The Macomb Daily to protect the identity of her daughter. "Ronald Walleman is not remorseful; he is sorry he got caught again."

Walleman told Chrzanowski that he is sorry and realizes he needs rehabilitation, but the judge responded that Walleman failed in his second chance.



"This man is not going to get better, he is only growing worse," the victim's mother said. "I am worried for the next little girl who happens to come within his vicinity."

The woman said her daughter received therapy after the incident but still experiences nightmares and fearful thoughts.

Johnston also argued against a probation department report that called him a "serial pedophile" because of only two convictions.

It was revealed in court that besides the two additional girls who had come forward to testify, one his niece and one his cousin, another girl accused him of molesting her when he was a teenager, although no charges were brought.

Also attending the hearing was Barbara Erztbischhoff-Coleman, a volunteer representative of Care House, a Mount Clemens-based facility that counsels child victims of physical and sexual abuse crimes in Macomb County. She is lobbying the state Legislature to enact a version of "Jessica's Law" establishing a minimum 25-year prison sentence for anyone convicted of molesting a child. The Florida version of the law was named in memory of Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year-old girl who was raped and killed by a repeat sex offender.

Currently, the maximum penalty is life in prison, but sentencing guidelines often result in a recommendation far less than that, particularly for a first-time offender.

The proposed law was developed by state Reps. Phil Pavlov, R-St. Clair Township, and David Law, R-West Bloomfield Township.

Petition and letter drives are being conducted to persuade lawmakers and Gov. Jennifer Granholm to pass the bill.

Michigan Report

April 17, 2005

## **LANSING ACTIVIST CALLS FOR HEALTH CARE AMENDMENT**

Lansing-area activist and politician Melissa Sue Robinson said Monday she was organizing a group that will push to put a proposed constitutional amendment on the November ballot that would establish universal health care insurance coverage for Michigan residents.

Ms. Robinson, who is a candidate for the 69<sup>th</sup> state House District, announced the formation of Michigan Citizens for Healthcare and said the group would try to collect at least 317,757 signatures by registered voters by July 10, the deadline, to put the proposal on the ballot.

While in a press release Ms. Robinson said she anticipated no difficulty in getting signatures, the petitions still needs preparation and she is looking for volunteers to both help run the campaign and distribute petitions.

Ann Arbor News Letters

April 18, 2006

## **Health insurance for all is the answer**

I'm skeptical about The Ann Arbor News' front page headline, "Landmark health plan passes" (The News, April 5). The Massachusetts legislation will simply put more people at the mercy of private health insurers.

Massachusetts citizens will be fined if they are unable or unwilling to "select a plan" from the undesirable array proffered by the insurance industry. We in Michigan must be wary! The Massachusetts legislation meets a major goal of the insurance industry nationwide: To market highly profitable, stripped down plans to the young and healthy, while forcing the rest of us to pay through the nose for complicated, sluggish, restrictive and exorbitant health insurance contracts. The News' adjacent headline, "Insurers make record profits in 2005" says it all. Tragically, Americans pay far more for health care than any other Western nation. Our tax dollars, private insurance payments and out-of-pocket costs amount to more than enough to fund high quality, single-payer, national health insurance for every man, woman and child in America. Instead, we have 45 million uninsured, millions more underinsured and inadequate health care delivery. The Massachusetts scheme is like placing a dirty little Band-Aid over a gaping wound! We must get together and take a serious look at universal national health insurance. Rep. John Conyers' H.R. 676 is an excellent start. People who seriously care about our health care crisis should get it, read it and push it forward.

Marilyn B. Daniels, Belleville

# Wife arrested in knife assault

POLICE BLOTTER

LAPEER TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

By James L. Smith

jmsmith@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6365

LAPEER TWP. - A township woman was arrested early Saturday after she allegedly stabbed her husband in the shoulder blade during an argument.

The woman, 38, who was arraigned during the weekend on a charge of assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder, remained in jail in lieu of \$10,000 bond Monday.

The couple, who live on Kathleen Drive, began arguing late Friday after a night of drinking about downloading music on the computer, said Lapeer County Sheriff's Lt. Gary Parks.

When the husband, 47, tried to leave the house, the woman stuck a paring knife into his left shoulder, causing a 2-inch cut, Parks said. Police were called at 11:56 p.m.

The husband was treated at a local hospital and released.

# Rape suspect waives prelim

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

ALLEGAN -- A 15-year-old Gobles boy charged in connection with the alleged rape of a 14-year-old girl at Otsego High School waived his preliminary examination Monday in Allegan County Circuit Court Family Division.

The charge stems from a Feb. 24 incident in which Otsego police were called to the high school about 6:30 p.m. following a report of an assault involving two students, authorities said.

The Allegan County Prosecutor's Office has determined that the teen, if found guilty, could be sentenced either as an adult or as a juvenile. That decision would be made by a judge.

The boy is being held in the Allegan County Youth Home and is scheduled to appear May 3 for a pretrial conference. If found guilty and sentenced as an adult, the teen could face up to life in prison.

Kalamazoo Gazette Letters

April 18, 2006

## **Build youth center, not juvenile home**

Once again Kalamazoo County is looking for money to lock up more young people. When will someone in charge at least make an attempt to use common sense? Kalamazoo does not need a larger juvenile home, it needs a state-of-the-art youth recreation and training center.

If you build a larger detention facility, all that happens is that it will be filled. If you build a youth center that offers more than just limited access to community information, you will fill young minds.

There are still a few companies left in the area that can offer training programs. I'll bet some of the employees would not mind sharing their expertise with the children of Kalamazoo.

Could anyone imagine a center for kids that has: A real supervised computer lab; a machine shop with models of working units from various companies, i.e. Stryker Corp., Summit Polymers and any other company that needs a trained workforce; a literacy program for children and adults and the usual recreation activities kids hold dear.

If the community involves itself with its youth, the youth will involve themselves in the community. The aspirations for Kalamazoo's children should be positive, so do the right thing -- train our kids, don't detain them.

Eric D. Stile  
Kalamazoo

04/18/2006

*Forum*

## **Seek out long-term care options**

**BY BONNIE NEWHOUSE**

Preparations are being made at all levels to accommodate the influx of baby boomers as they reach retirement.

It's expected that the numbers of older Americans who will need long-term care will almost double in the next 30 years. We're starting to see policy changes and new programs as we begin to adjust to these changing demographics.

At the federal level, Congress passed the "Money Follows the Person" bill, an important first step of legislation enabling people to move out of nursing homes and receive the care they need through community-based services.

In 2007, states can apply to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) — the federal Medicaid agency — to receive increased matching funds for this initiative.

Last month, CMS announced the opening of the National Direct Service Workforce Resource Center to respond to the large and growing shortage of workers who provide direct care and personal assistance to people with disabilities and older adults in the community.

That workforce includes direct support professionals, personal attendants, home health aides and certified nurse assistants. The Resource Center will help inform states in developing this workforce.

Michigan is moving forward to implement recommendations of the Long-Term Care Task Force. By June 2006, at least three single-point-of-entry programs will

be piloted across the state to begin to provide "one-stop shopping" for individuals and families seeking long-term care supports and services.

The need for more accessible housing is increasing. A new bill in the state Legislature, (HB 4138) would require 50 percent of new homes built by Michigan State Housing Development to be accessible.

A study by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured called "Who Stays and Who Goes Home," offers insight and positive actions older adults can take now to assure they will not spend years prematurely in a nursing home.

According to the study, 72 percent of people who returned to the community were in a hospital prior to admission to the nursing home. Many were never offered the choice to receive home-care services.

First, if you own your home, learn ways to make it accessible should you require a walker or wheelchair in the future. Making modifications now will make it possible for you to "age in place" and make your home accessible for others.

If you are building a home, you can add make some simple design changes like a no-step entrance, wider hallway and doors and more spacious bathrooms that make modification for accessibility easy should you need it.

Second, if you are planning surgery that may require weeks or months of rehabilitation and therapy, have a plan in place, in writing, for returning home.

Discuss your goal with your family or trusted advocate who will help you follow through.

Third, understand what resources are available in your community should you need help with transportation, chores or other assistance to live independently.

For more information, contact Northern Michigan Alliance for Independent Living or visit our Web site at: [www.nmailonline.org](http://www.nmailonline.org).



**About the author**

Bonnie Newhouse of Traverse City is information and referral coordinator for the Northern Michigan Alliance for Independent Living.

**About the forum**

The forum is a periodic column of opinion written by Record-Eagle readers in their areas of interest or expertise. Submissions of 500 words or less may be made by e-mailing [letters@record-eagle.com](mailto:letters@record-eagle.com). Please include biographical information and a photo.

# Homeless Man Turns In Lost Wallet Full Of Cash

POSTED: 8:09 am EDT April 18, 2006

SANTA ANA, Calif. -- Kim Bogue said her prayers have been answered.

She lost a wallet and figured her \$900 was gone for good. She had been saving the money for a trip to her native Thailand.

A homeless man found the wallet in a Southern California garbage bin while looking for cans to recycle. Bogue had accidentally tossed the wallet in the trash when she threw out her lunch leftovers at the office.

The man, who asked not to be identified, gave the wallet to a woman who works in a nearby building. The billfold still had Bogue's money and credit cards.

Bogue gave the homeless man \$100 for his honesty. She said he has a good heart.

*Copyright 2006 by The Associated Press.*

# **Additional service Salvation Army opens \$1.5 million expansion**

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

By Jaclyn Roeschke  
jroeschke@citpat.com -- 768-4945

Get ready for bigger programs, more food and more help from the Salvation Army, program directors said Monday.

The organization opened its \$1.5 million expansion at 806 E. Pearl St. -- a seven-year project that officials say will help the Salvation Army better serve the public.

The nearly 9,200-square-foot space includes classrooms for Head Start preschool programs, expanded after-school and day-camp program space, and a 3,700-square-foot pantry. It was funded through donations in wills and trusts.

"The reality is, we can't just run dry (on food) and say to people, 'Gosh, we just can't do anything for you,' " said Capt. George Gibbons, corps officer. "Our primary function is to reach out and help people, and this will allow us to do it."

The addition was built primarily because of a need for a larger pantry. Gibbons said the old one just wasn't big enough to serve the 300 to 400 families the Salvation Army gives food baskets to each month.

There was so little space that workers had to refuse some food donations. Boxes of food and cans were piled throughout the building's halls and office space, said Tamela Spicer, regional director of development.

"This will allow us to keep more food on hand," Spicer said. "There was little space before with the boxes of food stacked throughout -- it was really hard to maneuver."

The new pantry includes a walk-in refrigerator and freezer, which will let the agency store perishable food. Workers could not accept that previously.

In addition to the pantry, the expansion allows the Salvation Army to begin holding Head Start programs in September.

Two new classrooms will serve 68 students in morning and afternoon classes.

Also included in the expansion is computer and play space for the 6- to 18-year-old students who participate in the organization's STARS after-school program. Students in the program do homework, craft projects and other activities.

Op-Ed Contributor

# A Tax Credit or a Handout?

By DOROTHY A. BROWN

The New York Times

Published: April 18, 2006

Lexington, Va.

LOW-INCOME taxpayers are audited by the Internal Revenue Service more often than their higher-earning counterparts. The reason for this is not politics, as is commonly presumed; nor is it that these taxpayers must be watched closely for fraud. The problem, as many people found out this week, is that the low-income tax credit is wildly complex. For that reason, those who claim it are especially vulnerable to filing errors.

How complex is the credit? It's so complex that the I.R.S. publishes more than 50 pages of instructions. It's so complex that a Government Accountability Office report showed that taxpayers, tax-return preparers and I.R.S. staff members regularly made mistakes when calculating and administering it.

Because Congress and the I.R.S. have explained the high rate of audits for low-income earners as a fraud-prevention measure, these taxpayers have come under heightened scrutiny. But it is Congress that should be scrutinized for its failure to reduce the credit's complexity.

The trouble is that the fraud explanation resonates with the public far more deeply than the notion that those who claim the credit may be confused by the instructions. And that's because the stereotypes that apply to welfare recipients have come to be projected onto low-income taxpayers.

The credit didn't start out this way. Devised under President Gerald Ford as an alternative to welfare, the low-income tax credit was meant to reward low-wage workers with a tax credit that would offset income tax and social security liabilities. Over time, however, the credit entered the political lexicon as another name for welfare.

This transformation began when President Bill Clinton, in his January 1994 State of the Union address, greeted a recent expansion of the low-income tax credit as "real welfare reform." That's a Democratic president, equating a tax credit for the working poor with welfare reform.

Just as President Clinton was publicly expanding access to the low-income tax credit, Congress was busy ensuring that increasing numbers of those who claimed it would be audited. Indeed, the very year of President Clinton's address, Congress ended the I.R.S. program of auditing tax returns at random and stepped up the auditing of low-income taxpayers. Since 1998, Congress has appropriated more than \$1 billion for audits of low-income taxpayers.

In 2003, when Congress decided to prevent 12 million low-income children from receiving the full benefit of the child tax credit, several Republican members of Congress likened the low-income tax credit to welfare.

Representative Spencer Bachus, a Republican from Alabama, stated that by increasing the child tax credit for low-income tax credit recipients, "we're turning the tax code into a welfare system." Congressman Rob Portman, a Republican from Ohio, stated that the low-income tax

credit was "not a tax issue — it's a government transfer payment to people who do not pay income taxes."

A year later, the I.R.S. practically accepted the notion that the low-income tax credit was a form of welfare when it announced that certain low-income taxpayers would have to be pre-approved before they could receive their refunds. In other words, rather than receiving a refund after filling out a return like other taxpayers, these people will have to pre-qualify with a raft of paperwork proving their relationships with their children — as though they were applying for a governmental benefit.

Instead of spending our money subjecting low-income taxpayers to heightened scrutiny before and after they file their taxes, Congress should amend the law to eliminate the complexity. That would restore the low-income tax credit to its intended purpose — namely, rewarding the poor for working, not penalizing them for being poor.

Dorothy A. Brown is a professor at the Washington and Lee University School of Law.

# **Programs hang in the balance**

## **Bush's block grant changes could imperil their funding**

Maureen Feighan / The Detroit News

April 18, 2006

A popular federal grant program that helps fund everything from road repairs to home improvement programs for low-income Metro Detroiters is facing a 21 percent budget cut supporters fear could come right when more residents need support.

The \$3.7 billion Community Development Block Grant program would see its funding reduced to \$3 billion under President Bush's proposed 2007 budget, which goes into effect Oct. 1.

Block grant supporters worry the cuts would severely affect the programs they support, from senior exercise classes and Meals on Wheels in Westland to road repairs and homeless shelters in Macomb County.

Senior Bud O'Leary of Westland wants the funding left alone.

Four times a week, O'Leary visits the Westland Senior Resources Department's Friendship Center on Newburgh Road. He exercises, helps with Meals on Wheels and takes "the wife," as he calls her, to her Jazzercise classes. One-third of the center's \$504,123 budget comes from block grants.

"I just can't understand it," said O'Leary, who also sits on the center's senior advisory council.

"All the money this country throws away ... We need to call our senators and say 'What about us?' "

But U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson told The Detroit News earlier this month that the 32-year-old block grant program needs reforms.

Speaking by phone from Texas, Jackson said poor communities such as Detroit are actually being shortchanged under the current formulas, and wealthier communities that don't need grants are getting them. The formulas look at communities' poverty rates, pre-1940 housing and other factors.

Jackson said that's why he is working with congressional leaders now to update those calculations. If the reforms are approved, Jackson contends the block grant program won't need its current funding levels.

"Sometimes you just have to make a stand," Jackson said.

"And I'm making a stand. I'm saying we can't continue funding communities that don't need the money."

But the reforms would hurt Michigan and the Midwest as a whole, not help, say some community leaders.

Under the proposed formula HUD officials are favoring, Detroit's funding would jump 1 percent, and Flint's 2 percent, while cities such as Dearborn Heights, Westland, Troy and St. Clair Shores would get cuts of more than 50 percent.

The Southeast and Southwest United States would see the biggest increases.

"What it does is change the money flow in the country, and I think the money speaks for itself," said James Gilbert, Westland's director of housing and community development. "It's a shame. We're out of business with a 53 percent cut."

The proposed cuts mark the latest challenge for the block grant program, created in 1974 to help low- to moderate-income residents and reduce blight. Last year, the Bush administration proposed eliminating the program and starting one called Strengthening America's Communities. But the proposal went nowhere amid public outcry.

Jennifer Hing, a spokeswoman for U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Hills, who chairs the House Appropriations subcommittee that decides the block grant program's budget, said it's too early to tell whether funding levels will be restored this year.

If the cuts stick, communities across Metro Detroit say they'll have to cut back and possibly reduce staff. Oakland County is facing a \$1 million cut, which officials say could force them to eliminate 21 jobs. Macomb County is facing a \$180,000 drop and Dearborn could lose \$500,000. Michigan as a whole gets \$132.8 million a year in block grants. Of that, 19 communities in Metro Detroit get \$54.3 million directly, with the biggest chunk, \$38 million, going to Detroit. But those totals would all change under the new formulas HUD officials are considering, which would use other factors along with poverty rates to determine a community's need. Among those factors: The number of female-headed households with kids under 18 and housing 50 years and older occupied by someone living in poverty.

"We should be sending the money to where the greatest needs are," Jackson said. "And at the same time begin to hold cities accountable if they don't meet those needs."

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#### Block grants erode

Communities across Metro Detroit have watched their block grant allocations slowly erode between 2002 and 2006.

**Canton Township** : Down \$64,293

**Dearborn**: Down \$309,237

**Detroit**: Down \$14 million

**Southfield** : Down \$59,647

**Warren** : Down \$242,261

**Westland** : Down \$190,104

*SOURCE: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*